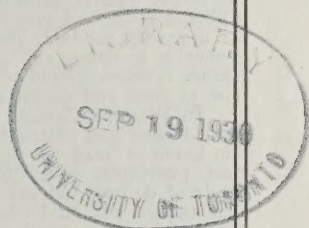




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DOCKING AND CASTRATION OF LAMBS

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"An International Prize Winning Wether Lamb"

DOMINION OF CANADA
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N.S

LIVE STOCK BRANCH
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DEFINITE PRICE CUTS BEING INSTITUTED FOR RAM LAMBS

Ram lambs have always been objected to by the packing industry, the retail butchers and the consumers. The continued improvement of Canadian sheep flocks and the general use of pure bred rams have resulted in a much improved type of market lambs. Coincident with this improvement in breeding there has developed a growing demand on the part of the consuming public for the better quality lamb carcass. At the present time the extent of the price cut varies at the different stockyard centres, depending on the extent to which the consumer is prepared to pay for a quality product. The principle of a definite cut for buck lambs and undocked lambs is now generally accepted and although the cuts may vary from one cent to two or more cents per pound, farmers should plan to increase the market value of their lambs by knowing when and how to dock and castrate and seeing that these operations are performed.

In Western Canada there is not the same percentage of buck lambs as all range stock is both docked and castrated. In the grain farming sections where flocks of twenty-five, fifty, or one hundred head are common, docking and castrating is also quite general. However, even in these provinces, especially in small flocks, a cut on buck lambs would mean a loss of many thousands of dollars and the same losses would occur in the Maritime Provinces and Quebec. The fact that a cut on bucks has been instituted at the Toronto stockyards would seem to foreshadow a wider application of the principle as soon as it can be made effective at other trading centres. Farmers should therefore plan to save money by knowing *When and How to Dock and Castrate*.



"Salesmanship counts in obtaining best market prices.
Sheepmen should provide the talking points."

Docking and Castrating

Undocked and uncastrated grade lambs are always an indication of primitive methods in the handling of sheep and no farmer who takes an interest in his flock will neglect the performance of these operations. Both are very simple and if properly performed at the right age there is little or no danger of loss. Moreover, docking adds to the neatness, comfort and appearance of the flock, while castrating enables the farmer to hold his wether lambs for late fall sales when a heavier weight usually brings a higher average price per pound. Ram lambs become troublesome about the middle of September, their gains are slower, they have to be separated from the rest of the flock or sold, and their value per pound is below that of ewe or wether lambs.

Age to Dock and Castrate

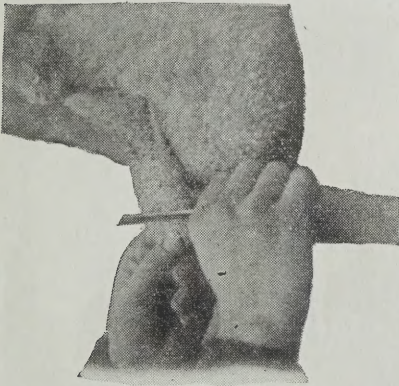
Docking and castrating should both be performed when the lambs are ten days or two weeks of age. Lambs under ten days of age are likely to be weak while those over two weeks have greater development of the organs and their removal is more of a shock to the system. It would be easier on the lambs to allow a few days to elapse between each operation. However, the farmer is usually rushed with work and a saving of time is effected if both are performed at once, and moreover, if the lambs are of the proper age, no serious results are likely to follow. When a few days are allowed to elapse between each operation, castrating is best performed first, as the wound heals more quickly, bleeds less and is better protected, not being so liable to injury when catching for docking. An assistant is necessary for castrating and although he may be dispensed with for docking, his services are useful and result in a neater and more uniform dock. A good sharp knife and a basin of water to which some disinfectant has been added is all the equipment that is required for the work. The operation is best performed in the morning of a bright, clear day.

Castrating

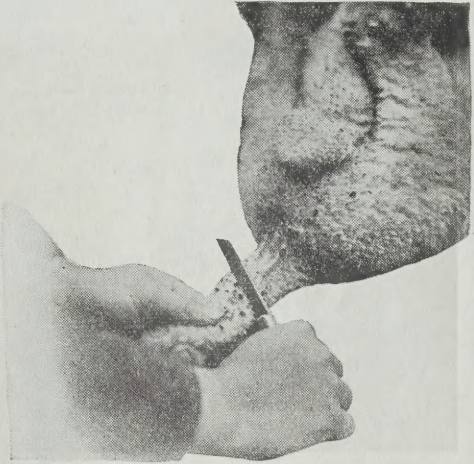
The lamb is held by the attendant at the proper height with the underside of the body outward, rump downward and the front and hind legs held together. The scrotum is grasped with the left hand of the operator and pulled outward to its full length when it is severed straight across about one inch from the body, removing one-third to one-half. The testicles will

now protrude and may be removed by the teeth of the operator or with small pinchers specially made for the purpose, or by slitting the peritoneal covering with the knife and pulling the testicle with the finger until the cord breaks. The first method is most commonly practised in all large sheep raising countries. It is quicker and is seldom followed by complications of any kind. Removal with pinchers having claws that fit around the testicle is very similar to the first method except that the pinchers are substituted for the teeth. There is more danger of crushing the testicle and it is slower. Lambs which show any tendency towards rupture should not be castrated by either of the above methods as the removal of the peritoneal lining allows the intestines to protrude. The last method, namely, slitting the peritoneal lining with the knife and pulling the testicle free is commonly practised with small flocks.

Care must be taken that the testicle is not crushed, otherwise the lamb will display male characteristics and will be troublesome in the fall. The peritoneal covering should be stitched in lambs that show any signs of rupture. In all three methods it is highly important that the lower part of the scrotum be removed. This permits of proper drainage for the wound and it does not heal too quickly. In no case should the testicle be removed through a small slit in the side of the scrotum leaving a pocket at the bottom in which the blood can accumulate, causing the wound to fester. If festering does occur the wound should be opened at once and all pus squeezed out. Lambs having abnormal testicles should not be operated upon until they become normal, otherwise there is much greater risk and danger of loss.



"Proper position for Castrating—Operator removing bottom third of scrotum."



"The tail should be severed between the second and third joints with a quick downward stroke."

Why Castrating Pays

1. Castrated lambs are not as restless as ram lambs. They feed better, put on more finish and fatten more quickly.
2. After weaning wether and ewe lambs can be run together thus eliminating the necessity for two pastures.
3. Wether lambs sell at a premium on all markets while on many markets ram lambs sell at a decided cut in price.
4. Ram lambs are a source of danger to both ewes and ewe lambs during the breeding season. Sheep raisers lose thousands of dollars annually through losses from ewes lambing out of season.
5. Sheep raisers who have ewe and wether lambs to market can exercise a wider degree of salesmanship. On bad markets such lambs can be put into the feed lot for sale when prices are more favourable.

Docking

The lamb is held in the same manner for docking as for castrating. A stub of one and a half to two inches in length should be left. If severed at the second joint from the body the desired length is usually obtained. The joints may be felt with the thumb of the left hand, the knife being placed directly over the second joint when with one downward stroke the tail is severed from the body. When one man is docking alone the lamb is allowed to stand on its feet with its head between the legs of the operator when the tail is severed with one stroke from below upwards. The practice of severing the tail with a chisel is not to be recommended as the bone is very often splintered leaving a painful wound that takes a long while to heal.

It is very seldom that lambs bleed excessively, if docked at the right age. However, occasionally a lamb will bleed to death if not looked after. The application of pressure just over the artery for a few moments will sometimes coagulate the blood. Tincture of iron is also used, but failing this a small cord may be tied around the stub and left for twelve or twenty-four hours when it should be removed, otherwise circulation is stopped and the part sloughs off. Cobwebs, puff balls, flour, etc., have been used with success but many of these primitive methods while effective in so far as stopping the bleeding is concerned, subject the lamb to danger from infection. The docking of older sheep is a much more serious matter than with lambs. A large sharp knife is the best instrument to use, the tail being severed at the second joint the same as with lambs. The most effective method of stopping the bleeding is to sear the artery with a red hot iron. Searing is recommended by some authorities for lambs, but its use is seldom necessary and the lamb is saved much pain. The docking shears are more costly, less practicable and have no special advantage over the use of the knife.

After operating, the flock should be turned into a dry pasture field where they can be watched during the day and any necessary attention given. There is seldom any danger after the first day, although it is advisable to watch the flock closely until the wounds are healed. Neither of the above operations should be performed in warm weather when the fly season is on, as maggots are almost certain to get into the wounds.

The importance of docking and castrating cannot be over emphasized. Both tend toward the production of greater profits and they go hand in hand with good practice in the management of the farm flock.



"Docked and castrated lambs always bring a premium on any market."

Why Docking Pays

1. Docking gives the lamb a neater and more attractive appearance for sale.
2. Docking makes for greater cleanliness in the flock. Dung locks do not accumulate in such volume and tagging is seldom necessary in any large degree at least.
3. Breeding ewes when docked are more likely to get in lamb. Flocks with long tails invariably have one or two ewes each year which fail to get in lamb.

How to Market Docked and Castrated Lambs to get the Premium

Experience to date has proved that straight carloads of docked and castrated lambs bring a premium on all stockyard centres. Unfortunately the local marketing machinery is such that this premium in many cases does not get back to the farmer who has taken pains to dock and castrate. Where farmers have their own shipping associations it is a comparatively easy matter to arrange for the sorting out of the ewe and wether lambs at the marketing point and have these sold separately at their actual market value. When lambs are sold to local buyers the usual custom is to buy flat regardless of whether they are buck lambs or ewes and wethers, and in such districts farmers who know the advantages of docking and castrating should endeavour to induce their neighbours to follow their example. It may be necessary for one or two years to actually offer to do the docking and castrating for the community, thus making it possible to market improved quality lambs.

Having seen to it that there is sufficient ewe and wether lambs in the community to make a carload, the next step is to see that the local buyer is advised as to what has been done intimating that the farmers desire to have the docked and castrated lambs marketed together. Weekly market reports provide the necessary information as to market values and it is then a matter of local salesmanship to see to it that sales are made on a basis equivalent to the market price for such lambs at the regular marketing centre.